



# Changing Minds

Fall 2008

Volume  
Three,  
Issue 4

“To educate, inform, advocate, and empower people in order to affect positive change and attitudes and treatment for psychiatric illnesses.”

## Seven Things Teachers Want to Know

By Emily Graham

Adjusting to school and having a quality year takes more than a stocked backpack. As teachers begin developing relationships with their students, it's important for students and parents to share any issues at home that may affect school performance. Open communication is critical, as students do best when parents and teachers work together as partners.

A new school year brings a great opportunity for this process. Many parents don't know where to begin. According to a school resource website, there are seven items teachers report that they wished they knew in order to help lay the groundwork for a cooperative relationship throughout the school year. They are:

- **Health conditions:** If a child is diabetic, uses an inhaler, is allergic to peanuts, or has a serious health condition, the teacher should know. It's also helpful to let the teacher know whether the child has been diagnosed with conditions like ADHD, which may affect behavior and concentration.

- **Family issues:** Inform the teacher about any major changes that could affect a child, such as a divorce, a death in the family, or a move. Even if the child seems to have adjusted well, alert teachers so they can watch for behavioral changes.

- **Personality traits or behavior issues:** Maybe one child is painfully shy and is worried about making friends at a new school. Or perhaps

a kindergartner has been having tantrums at home and may have them at school. It's best to make teachers aware of these issues before they become problems.

- **Strengths and weaknesses:** A child is a star student in math but is embarrassed to read aloud. Another loves language arts but struggles with science. Good teachers welcome these insights upfront, so they'll devote more time to help their pupils improve in the needed areas.

- **Learning style:** Parents have spent years teaching skills to kids, from potty train-

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### A Letter to a Friend: Facing Bipolar Illness

“Every challenge we take on has the power to shake us---to knock us to our knees. And yet, what's even more disconcerting than the jolt itself is our fear that we won't withstand it---no amount of grit, determination or want-power. When we feel the ground beneath us shifting, we panic. We forget everything we know and allow fear to freeze us.

And that's what happened to me.

But first, allow me to introduce myself. I'm a law-abiding citizen, have great friends and family, and floss daily. I'm a radio health reporter and best-selling



author. I keep my tray table locked and upright from takeoff to landing. I return my grocery cart to the proper stall, and I separate my laundry into darks and lights. Oh, and there's two

more things: I was an Olympic marathon runner and I have bipolar disorder. It all started with a little sadness. No, that's denial-- I was very depressed. I

had this constant, pervasive sense that I wasn't good enough; that no matter how hard I worked, I would always lose.

I developed odd physical symptoms -- severe pain, loss of balance, numbness. Things just got worse. Increasing emotional despair. Feeling as if I didn't have a friend in the world. Isolation. Inability to sleep. Sleeping too much. Tremendous mood swings. Wishes to die.

I was so used to simply suppressing all this, and masking it with a winning attitude-- with grit and determination. It just didn't work any-

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**INSIDE: Solving the 'Mystery' of the Teen Brain!!**

## Connect The Dots: A list of resources

The Arc Hamilton County, 801 W. 8<sup>th</sup> St, Suite 400, Cincinnati, OH 45203. 513.821.2113: Provides information, education and advocacy services to people with autism, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, mental retardation, and childhood brain injury.

[www.archamilton.org](http://www.archamilton.org)

Beech Acres Parenting Center; 6881 Beechmont Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45230

513.231.6630. Offers a wide range of educational and support programs as well as innovative mental health services to children, parents, families and schools.

[www.beechacres.org](http://www.beechacres.org)

Clermont Co Family and Children First; 1088 Wasserman Way, Suite B, Batavia Oh 45103,

513.732.5400. Services coordination (Cluster), services/supports for multi-need, multi-system children and families.

[www.clermontfcf.org](http://www.clermontfcf.org)

Glad House, Inc, 4721 Reading Rd, Building A, Cincinnati, Ohio 45237, 513.641.5530

Provides mental health counseling and intensive prevention services for children ages 5 - 12 and their families.

[www.gladhouse.org](http://www.gladhouse.org)

Community Outpatient Services - 221-HOPE (221-4673)

In six sites throughout Hamilton County and Butler County, counseling and community support for children and adolescents is provided by CCF Community Outpatient Services. Confidential counseling from licensed therapists helps children and families with problems resulting from mental illness, abuse, family conflict, di-

voice, Attention Deficit Disorder and school and behavioral issues. Psychiatric support for these services is also available when needed.

Expert Advice in Advocating for your Child's Educational Needs

Ohio: Special Education Regional Resource Center

1301 Bonnell Ave. Third Floor, Reading, Ohio 45215

513.563.0045 513.563.0588 (fax)

<http://www.hccanet.org/swoserre/>

Memorial Advocacy Services

3000 Vernon Place, Cincinnati, Ohio 45219

513.621.3032 ext. 2130, 5123.559.0300 (fax)

<http://www.memorialinc.com/>

Indiana:

InSource (Indiana Resource Center), 1703 South Ironwood Dr. South Bend, IN 46613

812.432.5706, 812.432.5178 (fax)

<http://www.inxource.org/>

Indiana Resource Center for Autism (IRCA), Indiana Institute on Disability and Community

2853 E. Tenth St, Bloomington, IN 47408-2696

812.855.6508, 812.855.9630 (fax), 812.855.9396 (TT)

<http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/fmain1.html>

Kentucky:

The Point Arc, Special Education Advocacy, 104 Pike St. Covington, Ky 41011

859.491.9191, 859.491.0763 (fax)

# 7 Things Teachers Really Want to Know

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ing to tying shoelaces, so they should understand specific learning styles. If a child learns better through hands-on activities than through listening to explanations, mention that to the teacher. Also share any teaching strategies that work well.

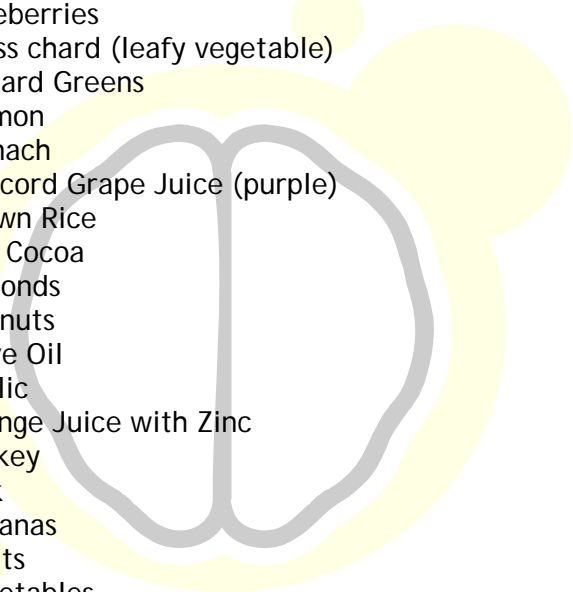
- **Study habits:** One boy speeds through math homework but labors over reading assignments. Another's grades suffer because she spends so much time at skating lessons. Inform teachers about study habits and any issues students face in completing the work. Teachers can offer suggestions to make homework time go more smoothly.
- **Special interests:** Knowing more about a child's hobbies or interests can help the teacher forge connections in the classroom. Let the teacher know about any special talent or activities that can be implemented into their curriculum or nurtured and strengthened.

The information contained in this article has been gathered from Schoolfamily.com website

## Great Brain Foods!!

-Try to incorporate into daily diet:

- Blueberries
- Swiss chard (leafy vegetable)
- Collard Greens
- Salmon
- Spinach
- Concord Grape Juice (purple)
- Brown Rice
- Hot Cocoa
- Almonds
- Walnuts
- Olive Oil
- Garlic
- Orange Juice with Zinc
- Turkey
- Milk
- Bananas
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Whole Grains



# Solving the ‘Mystery’ of the Teen Brain

By Lisa Eccles

*This is the second and final segment of a series on the “secrets of the teen age brain,” presented at a recent Cincinnati Children’s Hospital symposium. The first section described physical changes that affect teen thinking and behavior. This section deals with strategies to cope and foster learning and good choice development.*

Ask any parent of a sixteen year-old if they “get” their offspring’s erratic, confusing, and often challenging behaviors. Scientists are just getting a handle on teen brains, although studying them is vastly different, if not easier, than raising one. Understanding the organic process and development of the brain is helpful, but the bigger question becomes, “How do I cope with this?”



Frank J Kros, MSW, JD, president of the Upside Down organization, provided a wealth of helpful knowledge of teen brain functions, differences and strategies to effectively produce the positive results and actions. During his fact-filled presentation, he unveiled one “shocking” revelation — that children should not be told they are smart to motivate them to do better. “Don’t tell teens that they are smart,” he said. “More than three decades of research shows that a focus on effort—not intelligence or ability—is the key to success.” An overemphasis on intellect or talent—and the implication that such traits are innately fixed, leaves young people vulnerable to failure, fearful of challenges and unmotivated to learn. He noted that the mindset of intelligence as a fixed trait is negative and people think that mistakes are attributed to lack of ability. Instead, parents need to implement the growth mindset that teaches children that intelligence can be developed by working hard. Working hard and learning go hand in hand, and if parents praise the effort, no matter the outcome, they will have given their children the precious gift of becoming life-long learners.

Kros also emphasized nutrition, exercise, and sleep as critical ingredients to a healthy brain. “Exercise is critical to healthy brain development,” he noted. “Adolescents should engage in some physical activity at least 30 minutes a day.” Exercise doesn’t only combat weight gain and cardio-vascular health, it stimulates growth of new brain cells and elevates neuro-chemicals that enhance stronger connections and healthier blood flow and oxygen use.

Junk food as a steady diet harms the brain. Growing brains need lean protein, vitamins, minerals, fresh fruits and vegetables, decreased sugar and fat. (See Great Brain Foods on page 2).

Sleep is enormously important to healthy brain development and learning and adolescents need 9.25 hours a sleep per night. Those who sleep less also increase their risk of weight gain and have a higher emotional volatility. Typically, teens have sleep deprivation and they can be drowsy in class and cannot organize themselves well. The neurological changes that occur at this time make it even tougher—teens are needing more sleep to organize their brains and store new learning, but their bodies are releasing the melatonin at later times in the evening. This explains why teens naturally want to stay up later and sleep-in during early morning hours. Unfortunately, they have to get up for school, so encouraging afternoon naps for teens to catch up on badly needed rest.

Stress has a negative impact on everyone and teens are not spared. They are under an enormous pressure at

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# Solving the 'Mystery' of the Teen Age Brain

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this time in their young lives to handle body changes, volatile and powerful emotions and urges, social expectations, and peer pressure. They have to renegotiate parental relationships, get through school, deal with widely changing moods, issues such as drugs, sex, tobacco use, academics, work, and future plans post high school. This chronic stress will kill cells in the hippocampus, hurt memory and learning, compromise immune function and activate the limbic system which can cause even more emotion, according to Kros. "Use your intimate knowledge of your teens to help them discover what healthy stress release strategies work for them. In particular incorporate adequate low stress down time into your teen's stress management toolbox."

Teens need adults to provide concrete and simple models and explanations, *not fancy lectures*. Teens need to explore new learning in sports, art, theater, hobbies and other social activities. Parents need to watch for risks like depression, anger, disconnecting, changes in schoolwork, friend network, but no nagging! Also teens need their friends more than they admit or understand, so parents must be careful about judging peers too harshly.

A few practical suggestions for adults includes listening more than you speak and providing a better outlets for emotional turmoil—like healthy sports or fun activities. *Parents need to be parents*, not friends, according to Kros' surveys from teens. They also need to teach teens how to act with other adults – a skill that teens report is difficult.

Parents should be proactive socially and provide teens with choices of team and clubs that are creative and inclusive. Allow the teen to learn by experience, but with mentors and supervision. Structure and hold the limits set and help teens understand the relevance of what is expected. In essence, Kros says, *help them survive until their brains are more mature*.

Some excellent resources include books *Secrets of the Teenage Brian*, by Sheryl Feinstein; *How the Brain Learns*, David Sousa; *Why Do They Act That Way?* David Walsh; web sites [www.sciencedaily.com](http://www.sciencedaily.com), [www.brainplace.com](http://www.brainplace.com), [www.brainsconnection.com](http://www.brainsconnection.com).

## Letter to a Friend: Facing Bi-Polar Illness

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more. You may wonder to yourself: Why didn't I have it in me to do something? Answer: I was scared to death. Literally.

My world was getting smaller and smaller. And that's when I did it. I tried to take my own life.

There's some good news and there's some bad news, but the fact that there is some good is good. I narrowly avoided death, and with great help from brilliant doctors, loving friends and family, and a well-shaped therapeutic process that continues to this very day—a year later, I began to redefine myself. I have worked my way to a place where I am more at peace that at any

other point in my life.

I've also learned that we're raised to believe that 'normal' is a valuable commodity in describing people. I believe normal is a setting on a washing machine; and having depressive or bipolar disorder, or having ADHD, or diabetes, or any of a myriad of other medical diagnoses doesn't mean you're not 'normal'.

I've learned while there's no physical way to change a diagnosis. You can get better - and you can control your illness by taking prescribed medical action. And the same goes for your family and loved ones. I've learned that there is a lot of work to go into the effective tracking of mental disease, and a lot more understanding needs to start because of the many misconceptions about mental illnesses. The battles need to start right here; and

gather strength, encouragement and support from the community.

Finally, I've learned that success is about knowing who you are and then using who you are and what you do to serve yourself, your family, your community, . . .our world. It's knowing your strengths and building on them—and knowing your weaknesses and working on them. It's being confident in your own character.

Of course, I wish I knew then, what I know now, but maybe the last 46 years were just a warm-up for this moment.

Love, Julie

(Julie Isphording is the author of *Get Healthy, Get Happy*, and consultant, external affairs, *The Lindner Center of Hope*. Find more at [www.thehealthystuff.com](http://www.thehealthystuff.com)